

## **Wisconsin DNR Elk Advisory Committee**

Wednesday, April 6<sup>th</sup> 2016

Ho-Chunk Nation Administrative Building – Black River Falls, WI

9:30 AM

### **Members present:**

Kevin Wallenfang, *WDNR Wildlife Management Big Game Ecologist - Committee Chair*  
Dan Storm, *WDNR Science Services – Ungulate Researcher*  
Karen Sexton, *Ho-Chunk Nation Wildlife Biologist*  
Scott Roepke, *WDNR Jackson County/Black River Biologist*  
Allen Jacobson, *Wisconsin Conservation Congress*  
Jonathan Gilbert, *GLIFWC Wildlife Section Leader*  
Carrie Nelson, *USFS Great Divide District Wildlife Biologist – sitting in for Dan Eklund*  
Mike Zeckmeister, *WDNR NOD Wildlife Supervisor*  
Jon Schweitzer, *Jackson County Forestry and Parks*  
Kurt Haas, *WDNR Jackson County Conservation Warden*  
Gary Dieck, *Wisconsin Wildlife Federation*  
Laine Stowell, *WDNR Sawyer County/Clam Lake Elk Biologist*  
Lou George, *Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation*  
Rich Kirchmeyer, *WI Bowhunters Association*  
Tami Ryan, *WDNR Wildlife Health Section Chief*  
Peter Bakkan, *WDNR Black River State Forest Property Supervisor*

### **Members absent:**

Kris Johansen, *WDNR WR Area Wildlife Supervisor – Interim WCD Supervisor*  
Sawyer Briel, *WDNR Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Communications Specialist*  
Tim Ginnett, *UWSP*

### **Guests present:**

Derek Johnson, *WDNR Assistant Big Game Ecologist*  
Lindsey Long, *WDNR State Wildlife Veterinarian*  
Jon Prokott, *WDNR Wildlife Technician – Elk Caretaker*

## **2015-2016 Trapping Season Overview**

The committee discussed the recently completed trapping and relocation efforts to the Black River Falls quarantine facility. Highlights included bringing in 39 new elk (4 yearling bulls, 4 bull calves, 16 adult cows, 6 yearling cows, and 9 cow calves), which are all very healthy. The health testing process was overviewed.

## **Research/Monitoring Update – Dan Storm**

Dan Storm gave a presentation on the initial results from the trail camera monitoring study in the Clam Lake Elk Range. This project is meant to develop and test methods for a cost-effective way to monitor the elk population that would require low or no marking of animals. There was a discussion on the sampling and analysis techniques used. Also the different models were summarized.

There was also a discussion on Snapshot Wisconsin, which will be expanded and use volunteers this spring in Sawyer County. The elk population monitoring effort may be rolled into the Snapshot program.

### **Clam Lake Elk Population Estimate and Prospects for a 2016 Hunt**

The 2016 pre-calving population estimate is about 130 animals broken into several groups throughout the Clam Lake Elk Range. Considering an estimated 35 calves born last year and another very mild winter, this estimate was somewhat surprising and herd growth was lower than anticipated. This was primarily due to adjustments that were made following the severe winter of 2013-14 when we estimate significant losses. Dan Storm covered the many aspects of herd population dynamics and will be developing a herd history summary that will better present the changes to the population over time. 2016 post-calving estimates for the herd are expected to be about 165 total animals in the Clam Lake Elk Range.

**Recommendation: The committee agreed unanimously that the CLER elk population has not reached the required 200 animals to initiate a hunting season in 2016.**

### **General Herd Dynamics Update**

Scott Roepke and Laine Stowell overviewed recent population events in their respective areas. There was a discussion on public perception of the elk herd and mortality. It was noted that there is a need to counteract misinformed comments about the elk populations.

### **Planning for Years 3 and 4 of Translocation**

The committee discussed the plan for moving the focus of the reintroduction from the BRER to the CLER, and specifically to the Meyer's Farm location in the Flambeau River State Forest. This was the site the committee agreed (October 2015 meeting) to release the 2017 and 2018 cohort of Kentucky elk. Laine outlined the work timeline to prepare the quarantine facility site and what still needs to be done. A new fence will be constructed, via contract, and the chute system/building will be disassembled and rebuilt on the new site.

**Recommendation: The committee recommends that a small sub-committee be developed to an exit strategy for transferring equipment and operations from BRER to the Meyer's Farm site.**

### **Habitat Project Updates**

Committee members gave updates on current habitat improvement projects in their areas. This included many opening maintenance projects in the Clam Lake and Black River elk ranges. Carrie Nelson gave an update on the Black Torch proposal, which will affect almost 15,000 acres of timber harvest in the CLER. There are also a number of site inventory projects that are going to occur on elk range sites.

RMEF was asked to distribute new Project Advisory Committee forms as soon as possible. The amount of PAC dollars available for 2016 projects was not known, but appears to be significantly more than 2015.

### **Assisted Dispersal 2017**

The committee discussed the reasons for and requirements for proposing assisted dispersal in the Clam Lake Elk Range.

**Recommendation:** The committee recommends that, because of the current population level and distribution of various sex and age classes, there be no assisted dispersal in 2017.

**Partner Updates**

Members were provided an opportunity to give updates. Ho-Chunk Nation, WCC, GLIFWC, USFS, Jackson Co. Forestry and Parks, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, RMEF, and the Wisconsin Bowhunters Association.

Meeting adjourned at 2:21 PM

*Notes compiled by Derek Johnson – Assistant Big Game Ecologist*